

WASHINGTON, DC – House Democratic Whip Steny H. Hoyer (MD) released the following statement today at a rally of the American Federation of Government Employees/United Department of Defense Workers Coalition:

“Let me begin by thanking Richard Trumka, John Gage, Ron Ault, Greg Juneman, Rick Brown, Gerry McIntee and the entire ‘United DoD Coalition’ for hosting this important rally.

“You, the civilian professionals at the Departments of Defense and Homeland Security, are performing a critical role in protecting our nation, supporting our combat troops, and waging the war against terror.

“Your nation thanks you, and I thank you. Without you, our military forces and domestic security agencies simply could not function.

“Yet despite all you do, these are not the friendliest of times for the nearly 900,000 civilians employed at Departments of Defense and Homeland Security.

“For that matter, these are not the friendliest of times for the other 900,000 women and men employed in other federal agencies.

“If ever there was a time for federal employees to be united in a cause, it is now.

“Like you, I am deeply concerned about the Bush Administration’s misguided and reckless proposal to gut the civil service system.

“I am particularly troubled by the new personnel regulations at the Departments of Defense and Homeland Security that the administration now wants to extend government-wide.

“As every one of you knows, these rules will significantly limit basic employee rights and protections, including collective bargaining rights of employees.

“When Congress authorized a restructuring of the personnel systems at Defense and Homeland security two years ago, it envisioned a new personnel system that would enable Defense and DHS employees to rise to the challenge of defending our nation in a post-9/11 environment.

“It was understood that department managers and employee representatives would work collaboratively, through the ‘meet and confer process’ to develop a personnel system that was fair, flexible, and transparent.

“I am thus disappointed that the new regulations fall short of this objective. Indeed, they may actually be counterproductive.

“We must resist this administration’s efforts to weaken collective bargaining rights and civil service protections.

“These rights and protections are all we have to ensure your work is compensated fairly and performed in a professional, non-partisan manner.

“Simply put, the cornerstones of NSPS and the DHS personnel regulations involve replacing the GS pay scale with a ‘pay-for-performance system’ and eliminating collective bargaining and appeal rights.

“Once implemented, these changes will result in lower salaries, the elimination of whistle blower protections, and lowered worker morale.

“My greatest fear is that these misguided changes will lead to a severely compromised state of national security.

“I intend to work closely with the ‘United DoD Coalition’ to monitor the implementation of the new personnel systems. I will not hesitate to call on Congress to take appropriate action if the new system creates havoc.”

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